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from I Tim. 1:17, however, others see here an allusion to speculations based on the legendary history of the Patriarchs and their descendants, as, e.g., in the Apocalyptic literature.

5. The last of these five canons for interpretations is *interpret analogically*. It is a safe rule to interpret an author by himself wherever possible, and a document by itself or other contemporary documents. It stands to reason that any sane writer will seek uniformity—barring changes for growth, development, or different conditions.

Again, our interpretation of Heb. 6:6 (Rom. 1:17; cf. chap. 4, might be referred to this canon) finds further help by reference to chap. 10. Surely, in four short chapters the most rhetorical writer in the New Testament would hardly

contradict himself so utterly, especially since he of all the writers was appealing to a critical, possibly hostile, audience. Hence chap. 6 must be interpreted, wherever in doubt, in harmony with the indubitable meaning of chap. 10. Further light appears by reference to the Jewish theological background. From Deut. down to IV Esdras we find a chain of references witnessing to the idea of purgation by fire, the finality of the act, and, further, it is evident that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews had not come to the fulness of the knowledge of the gospel as taught by Paul.

This last canon should be applied with caution, for progressive spirits like a Paul, a Luther, or a Wesley never hesitate to revise their opinions in the light of new evidence.¹

THE APOSTLE PAUL IN ARABIA

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“But I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus”: if Paul had not written this to the Galatians, we should know nothing about an important part of his apostolic career.

Many of the authorities on the life of Paul appear to agree that he spent two or three years in Arabia, directly after his conversion, and conclude that he spent that amount of time in reflection;

that he found himself in much confusion as a result of the vision near Damascus and that this time was required for intellectual and theological readjustment before he would be equipped for his great career as an apostle. These volumes also appear to agree essentially in the conclusion that “Arabia” is to be identified with the present Arabian peninsula. There are some difficulties

¹ Cf. Paul's change of view on the question of the Parousia, and the changing viewpoint in Wesley's *Christian Perfection*.

in the way of accepting these quite natural conclusions.

It is improbable that the conversion of Paul was a psychological upheaval that resulted in chaos, or even in temporary confusion. Professor James, in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, defines conversion as follows:

To be converted, to be regenerated . . . are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior, and unhappy, becomes unified, and consciously right, superior, and happy, in consequence of its superior hold upon religious realities.

Romans, Galatians, Paul's addresses quoted in Acts, and his efficient career as a missionary, all indicate that Paul's conversion was not a process of unsettling, but of bringing order and light where before there was uncertainty and the darkness of a great, deep unrest and contradiction of soul; that his spirit, baffled by the hopelessness of legalism, was liberated by a vision of the heavenly Messiah.

Thus the accepted interpretation of the "sojourn in Arabia" appears to be psychologically untenable. Had Paul gone away into "Arabia" from such a motive before his conversion, the logic would be sound. Indeed, the theory that Paul needed Arabia for reflection and readjustment appears to be founded, unwittingly, upon the supposition that the experience he underwent as he drew near Damascus was a sudden materialistic phenomenon that arrested his headstrong course, rather than the culmination of a profound inner experience such as Paul speaks of in Romans and Galatians.

Again, Paul was a man of action, and not a recluse. The better part of three years of secluded reflection in Arabia is an incredible anomaly in the early days of the first love, and the new-found joy of a converted Paul. Was Paul outdone by Andrew who hastened to tell his brother Simon that he had found the Messiah? And Paul expressly tells the Galatians that the light came into his soul that he might "make him known among the Gentiles." He further declares in the next word that "straightway," instead of studying, or inquiring from Peter or other Christians, he went away into "Arabia," logically, to begin the task that had just been made plain to him. Was Paul the man who must first go and "bury the dead" of his former theology? Would Paul, having once seen the Lord and heard his command, turn back from the plow for three years? Had Paul been such a personality we should never have heard of him. Had the impetuous and passion-impelled Paul been capable of becoming a recluse for the first three years of his Christian joy, neither Jews nor Romans would ever have found it necessary to persecute him, for he would never have become the most efficient of those who turned the world upside down.

The Pauline type of man thinks on his feet, and reflects as he works. The virility and vitality of his conception of Christianity all argue that his convictions were forged by a strong and quick arm that would break away from any sling. Modern students will do well to remember that in his process of inner readjustment he did not need to consult a long line of precedents, nor to digest bookcases full of authorities in

many languages. Such readjusting as was needed could most healthily be done in action. Paul was not the man to seek to learn to swim by reading books about the subject, but by plunging into deep water. He was a modern great-power-at-high-speed locomotive and could get up steam pressure for his future task best by running at seventy miles an hour, with the exhaust to furnish a blast for the fires. Instead of going away into Arabia for three years of reflection, he would more likely follow Jesus' precedent of a peripatetic school and ministry combined.

Acts suggests an Apostolic-age meaning of the term "Arabia" which appears to have been overlooked. The list of the Jews of the Dispersion represented at the Feast of Pentecost names the Eastern Dispersion first: "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers of Mesopotamia"; then the central region, Judea, is named; then the Western Dispersion: "Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and sojourners from Rome." Then follow two summary and definitive, inclusive ethnic terms: "Both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians," "Cretans" signifying the Western Dispersion by a western geographical name, while "Arabians," in like manner, summarized the eastern groups named (Acts 2:9-11a).

In the Old Testament literature, Arabia was often referred to as "Kedem," *the East* (cf. Gen. 10:30; 25:6; 29:1, etc.). Trained in Palestine, Paul naturally used "the East" and "Arabia" as interchangeable terms. "Arabia" is equivalent to saying, "the

field of the Eastern Dispersion." This loose use of geographical and ethnic terms, and even their misapplication, is exceedingly common in Hebrew and Aramaic literature (cf. D. S. Margoliouth, article "Arabians," in Hastings' *Bible Dictionary*, Vol. I).

There are abundant reasons why Paul, directly or "straightway" after his conversion, should go and preach to the Eastern Dispersion. It is a matter of common agreement that the Eastern or Hebrew Dispersion, and the Western or Greek Dispersion were separated by differences far wider and more fundamental than those of language. Tradition, cultural environment, training, and prejudice had separated them indeed as "far as the East is from the West." Edersheim states convincingly the attitude of the Pharisees toward the two dispersions: "Phariseism, in its pride of legal purity and of the possession of traditional lore, with all that it involved, made no secret of its contempt for the Hellenists, and openly declared the Grecian far inferior to the Babylonian dispersion" (*Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, I, 7 ff.). Only comparatively few of the exiles had returned to Palestine. The school of Gamaliel as well as the "Eastern" Pharisees recognized that the only perfect genealogical lists were to be found in the Babylonian Dispersion, and that the Eastern Dispersion alone could claim purity of descent from Abraham. Ezra was so important a personage to Judaism that according to rabbinic teaching the Law would have been given by him, had not Moses obtained that honor. The best Targums and the Mishna or second Law came from Babylon. Edersheim states that the

father of Halakkic study was Hillel the Babylonian, while Eleazar the Mede, who lived contemporary with Paul, was the most popular Haggadist.

Had Paul been a Sadducee as well as Hellenist-born, his preaching first to the Eastern Dispersion would be remarkable. As a "Pharisee of the Pharisees" he was bound to go first to the pure descendants of Abraham, the most genuine Jews of the race. The esteem in which Babylon was held by Paul's contemporaries is shown by the fact that after the destruction of Jerusalem with its temple, the spiritual supremacy of Judaism removed to the Euphrates valley, and after 73 A.D. Babylon became the rabbinic capital. Thither also followed the apostle of the Judaizing Christians (cf. I Pet. 5:13).

While Paul's commission was to the Gentiles, he uniformly went first, in each center of the Roman Empire where he wrought, into the synagogue and began by preaching Jesus to the Jews. Only after they had "rejected the counsel of God" did he turn to the Gentiles. He recognized that his debt was first to the Jew. True to the precedent of Jesus, the children of the household must first be fed, then the dogs. Like Jesus, he laments in bitterness of soul the rejection of their Messiah by his own race.

Students of the life of Paul seem to be obsessed with the foregone conclusion that his missionary career and work are faithfully recorded in the Acts. But the fragmentary nature of this source of information regarding his experiences is evidenced by the catalogue of his sufferings in II Cor. 11:23-27. He says he has been in "prisons," but the Book of Acts records only one such experience

before the letters were written to Corinth, viz., the one at Philippi. He tells of five scourgings at the hands of the Jews, and Acts knows of none of them. Thrice was he beaten with rods, but we otherwise know of but one such event. Thrice also had he suffered shipwreck, and on one occasion had struggled for his life in the water for twenty-four hours, but Acts contains not a reference to such events. The most fascinating chapters of his life remain unwritten.

What is more plausible than that many of Paul's sufferings at the hands of the Jews, possibly all five of the "forty stripes save one," were his reward for telling the Eastern Dispersion that he had found their Messiah? The zealots for the law and the rabbinic traditions, in "Arabia," were so bitter against his revolutionary message that he was soon convinced that the only possible field for his apostolic mission was the field of the Western Dispersion. The marvel is that he returned to Damascus from his first great missionary tour alive.

It is possible that it was on the journey into "Arabia" that Paul became accustomed to make the claim that he was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews." It would certainly not be accepted by representatives of the Babylonian Dispersion.

They must have charged him with being a Greek, and have scoffed at his claim to being a Hebrew of pure extraction. Should they accept radical doctrines proclaimed by a Tarsus-born pupil of the Hellenist Gamaliel? Was it to be thought for a moment that a falsely called Pharisee, leavened by Greek philosophy and Sadduceeism, might

come into the domain of the only pure descendants of Abraham, the authors and defenders of the Law in its divine purity, and inculcate in their midst pernicious and heretical heathen doctrine—the climax of it all that the Messiah had commissioned him to preach to the hated Gentiles?

The success of his mission to the Arabian Dispersion appears to have been nil. There are no records of churches planted, nor did any fellow-workers from there accompany him on his western tours, unless it possibly be true that Silas was an "Arabian." These experiences with the Babylonian Jews add significance to the words he wrote later to the Galatians:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman, and one by the freewoman. But the one by the bondwoman was born after the flesh, and the one by the free woman through promise. [Let the Eastern Dispersion pride themselves on their pure descent from the flesh and blood of Abraham!] Which things are an allegory, for these women are two covenants, one from mount Sinai bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar (for the word Hagar is mount Sinai in *Arabia*), and answers to the Jerusalem that now is, for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem which is from above is free, which is our mother. . . . But ye, brethren, after the manner of Isaac, are children of the promise. But as then the one born after the flesh persecuted the one born after the spirit, so also is it now. But what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman with her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not inherit with the son of the freewoman.

His disappointing experiences with the Eastern Dispersion and his sufferings there interpreted the Scripture to him.

Finding himself a Christian at Damascus, on the line of march of the caravans between Babylon and Jerusalem, Paul may logically enough have concluded that the Lord's plan was for him to go on into "Arabia." After the events of this first tour had shown him there was no field for his mission in the East, he returned to Damascus, closely followed by the plotting Babylonian Jews. Escaping their deadly plots under Aretas, he turned to the Western Dispersion, where Greek philosophy and culture had providentially modified the prejudice of the Jews, and made possible the planting of Christian churches that should contain Jews, proselytes, and Gentiles.

The hatred of the Babylonian Dispersion for Paul may have contributed to the defeat of his hopes and plans on his last visit to Jerusalem many years later, and may have promoted his long imprisonment and martyrdom.

His claim before Agrippa II is vindicated by this view of "Arabia" and of Paul's three years there: "Whereupon, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." For three years of reflection in the Arabian desert would have been rank disobedience to the commission received from the risen Lord on the way to Damascus: "To be a witness and a minister to those dwelling afar off, that they should turn from darkness to light" (Acts 26:16 ff.).